

In tune

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studied music at Clark College. The showroom at the School of Piano Technology for the Blind contains various donated pianos, ranging in price from \$995 to \$3,495. There is also a refurbished 1939 Steinway "B" Grand available to purchase. The piano, owned by retired piano teacher Helen Luecke, is listed at \$44,995. The front entryway of the school also includes photographs of graduating classes and their numerous business cards.

Mark Burbey, a student from Minneapolis, has previously worked as a custodian and medical transcriptionist as well as in the areas of data administration, medical assembly and phone customer service.

"The school has given me an opportunity to branch out in a new direction and given me the support I need for my visual impairment, to learn this trade," he said. "There's a sense of camaraderie. It's a low stress environment that is constructive. It helps to give us one-on-one instruction that we need to really learn about the physical parts of the piano."

Burbey, 40, was born legally blind. He has 10 percent of normal vision in his right eye.

After graduating, Burbey plans to start his own business, which will provide piano servicing, tuning, regulation and repair in the Twin Cities.

"Piano tuning can be done to a large degree by touch and hearing and knowledge of how to tune a temperament correctly," he said. "In this career, the visual demands are considerably less than other career fields."

Eight students at a time attend the school for the individualized two-year program.

Alan Holst, of Huntington Beach, Calif., is preparing for his sixth career. Previous jobs have been in the areas of college development, radio advertising, high technology, business networking and financial planning.

"At each job, I was the only blind person in it," Holst said. "I had to invent techniques. Having to learn all of that stuff from people who are not accustomed to blindness is pretty difficult."

"Here, I was not going to have to invent the wheel," he added. "At this point in life, to make money as a

Benefit concert for the School of Piano Technology for the Blind

Featuring: Pianist Tom Grant and vocalist Nancy Curtin

When: Sunday, June 27, from 5 to 7 p.m. (rain or shine)

Where: Bethany Vineyard, 4115 N.E. 259th St., Ridgefield

Cost: \$25, general admission and \$75, VIP admission

Tickets: Call 693-1511 or visit www.brownbagtickets.com/event/104150.

professional is complicated and intense. It is a personal growth experience. It caters to my disability and is quite enlightening — understanding problems are not unique to me — they're common to blindness."

Holst, in his early 50s, visits his wife and two grown children every six weeks. He was born blind.

"Piano tuning is quite an interesting intellectual exercise," Holst said. "They have 88 keys, and most have three strings. If any is set wrong, you hear it. Most of my previous work was deskwork. You get much more exercise tuning a piano, than working on a computer."

After graduating from the piano tuning and repairing program, he would like to fix and sell pianos or tune them in churches or homes.

"I want to make them good to listen to and more fun to play," Holst said. "It's my way of making the world a prettier place and a more satisfying place."

The School of Piano Technology for the Blind, 2510 E. Evergreen Blvd., provides piano sales, tunings and repairs Monday through Friday, from 8 a.m. to noon and from 1 to 5 p.m. Appointments are also available. For more information, call 693-1511 or visit www.pianotuningschool.org.